



AMERICAS WATCH

☐ REPLY TO: 36 WEST 44TH STREET, NEW YORK, NEW YORK 10036 (212) 840-9460
☒ REPLY TO: 705 G STREET, S.E., WASHINGTON, D.C. 20003 (202) 546-9336

CW037

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J. E. Mendez

January 6, 1983

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Juan Mendez
DIRECTOR
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Vic Johnson
Staff Director
Subcommittee on Inter-American
Affairs
709 House Annex 1
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Vic,

On the occasion of your trip to Argentina this month, we hope you will find an opportunity to help us with the two cases described in the attachment to this letter. We hope that you will be able to discuss them with government officials during your stay in Buenos Aires.

As you will read in the attached descriptions, these are cases in which urgent action by the Argentine government is needed to avoid further human suffering. While in Buenos Aires, it would also be possible for you to obtain more detailed information on these cases from the human rights leaders with whom we hope you will have a chance to meet.

Please call me at 546-9336 if there is any additional information you need from us. Thank you very much in advance for your attention to these cases and any assistance you may provide.

Sincerely,

J. E. Mendez
Juan E. Méndez

ARGENTINA PROJECT (S200000044)

U.S. DEPT. OF STATE, A/RPS/IPS

Margaret P. Grafeld, Director

(☒) Release () Excise () Deny

Exemption(s): _____

Declassify: () In Part () In Full

() Classify as _____ () Extend as _____ () Downgrade to _____

Date _____ Declassify on _____ Reason _____

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178/293

THE RAMIREZ CHILDREN

A juvenile court in suburban Buenos Aires has denied custody of his three children to Julio Ramirez-Dominguez, a Paraguayan refugee presently in Sweden. Ramirez resided in Buenos Aires beginning in 1967. In 1971 he married Vicenta Orrego-Meza, also Paraguayan. They were both community leaders and activists in the shantytown where they lived in the southern suburbs of Buenos Aires. Ramirez was apprehended in December 1974, tortured, and eventually prosecuted. Not until August of 1977 was he sentenced -- to three years in prison for alleged possession of subversive literature. (Ramirez was illiterate at the time of his detention; he taught himself to read and write while in prison.) After serving out his sentence, he remained in prison at the disposition of the Executive, under the state of siege. *ERP Strong*

In March 1977, his wife and three children were abducted from their home in Avellaneda. Since then, Mrs. Ramirez has joined the ranks of the desaparecidos, the unacknowledged prisoners. Later in 1977, former neighbors of the Ramirez family happened to meet one of their children in the streets of another suburb of Buenos Aires. It was then established that the three children were at the disposition of Judge Marta Delia Pons, of the Court of Minors of the provincial tribunals of Lomas de Zamora.

In July 1978, Ramirez sent a brief to the judge from prison, requesting custody of his children. He received promises from military and prison authorities that he would be reunited with them. In October 1980, the government decided to expel him as an undesirable alien; although he refused to leave Argentina without his children, he was forced onto a plane to Sweden, where he was granted refugee status.

Lawyers with CELS, a human rights organization in Buenos Aires, represented him in his claim for custody of his children. In October 1982, Judge Pons rejected his petition, on the grounds that he had proven himself unfit as a parent, by his alleged violation of Argentine law. His lawyers have complained publicly about the political nature of this decision, and have requested international attention. The Grandmothers of Plaza de Mayo, a human rights group that seeks information about disappeared children, has listed this case in its material. The children, Carlos Alberto, 12, Maria Ester, 10, and Alejandro Mariano, 8, are presently held in Casa de Belen, an orphanage in Banfield, Province of Buenos Aires, at the disposition of the court. By orders of the judge, they are refused access to contacts and correspondence from friends, neighbors or relatives.